

THE  
PARABLE  
OF THE  
TOP-KNOTS.

Licensed according to Order.

**I**T was a serene Sun-shine Morning that Dame Nature came forth from her Retirements, to take a Survey of her Works, and recreate her self with the Prospect of her own beautiful Image scatter'd through the Universe: She beheld the Sun, that glorious Fountain of Light casting abroad his Splendors with an unveiled Countenance; but the more modest Moon shrouded above half her Face under a Mask, unwilling to be expos'd to the lascivious Eye of every Endymion, she saw the rest of the Planets and Stars bashfully twinkling their innocent Glances at each other, and on all the World; she travers'd the Elements, and observ'd every thing kept the Order which she had first appointed it. But she fix'd a more particular Eye on Man, the Master-piece of all her Works, the Masterless Epitome of the whole Creation; and calling to mind his primitive Perfections, with the Tragical Story of his Fall, she fetch'd a deep Sigh, which made the Earth to tremble. Whilst she was pensively busied in this Contemplation, I perceiv'd her Brows suddenly knit, and she gave a start, which put all the Elements into a Disorder. Looking about me to see what was the Occasion of this violent Passion, I beheld a LADY passing by her, dress'd Cap-

a-pe after the present mode: Upon which I heard the Venerable Matron break forth into these Expressions;

*Bless me said she! what uncouth Object is this invades my Eyes! a thing so foreign to all the known Species of Beings! Or am I superannuated and some new Power usurp'd my Place, to feng the World again, and hammer out such Forms as ne're before were rank'd in the great List of all my Works? Stay thou bold Phantasm! tell me what thou art? With that the Lady turn'd about, and made her this Answer.*

*Lady.* You are merrily disposed Madam, and discover the Brilliant of Language in your Expressions: I am pleas'd with your Raillery; but pray *What News from Paris?* In what Arroy did the Dauphiness appear last Ball? I am told, my Commode is a Tire too low, as they adjust it at the French Court.

*Nature.* Am I a-dream'd, or has the Multitude of Years impair'd my Sight and Judgment? The Voice is Woman's, but for the grating Figure I want a Name; I see a moving Pyramid of Gayeties, a walking Toy-shop, a speaking Gallimaufry of Ribbons, Laces, Silks and Jewels, as if some upstart trimick Nature had been at work on purpose to upbraid my Skill, and

tell me that in framing Woman I left out the Essentials.

Whilst *Dame Nature* was thus expostulating the Case with her self, I heard a sudden Noise rais'd behind me, at which looking that way, I saw *Heracles* *Ridens* standing in a Corner, ready to break his Twatling string, he was so big with Laughter; 'tis a fine time of day, said he, with Women, when *Nature* her self will not shew 'em, as if she were ashamed of her Productions: Do but mind yonder Lady she has spent five Hours this Morning in Rigging and Carreering her self for publick Appearance; and I dare be bold to say, you may as soon reckon up the Numerous Tackle of a Ship, as give the true Nomenclature of all the gawdy Whim-whams she wears about her: You would not wonder at me for changing my Note, had you seen, as I did, what pains this little *She-Lucifer* took to day, to mend the supposed Boreheny of Nature in her Face; how she hunted after imaginary Faults in her Cheeks, to find occasion for Black Patcher; how she plac'd and displac'd 'em an hundred times over, pursuing the least Spot and Freckle in her Skin to a thousand Dilemmas: with Wills, Paint and Patch, till tired with the tedious Discipline of her Toiler, she sails forth of her Chamber like a new-launch'd Vessel with Pendants and Streamers flying, and all her Female Tackle in order from the Top and Top-Gallant to the Humble Keel: Do but regard her Rigging above Deck, and you'd swear she carries Baw-Steeple upon her Head, or the famous Tower of Severus in Rome, which was built seven Ranks of Pillars one above another, Such a lofty Gradation of Top-Knots, if it proceeds, will befrend the Carpenters and Bricklayers, for our Gentry and Tradesmen in time will be forced to pull down their low pitch'd Houses, and take the height of the Stories in the next Structure from the elevated Pagiant of Trinkets on their Wives and Daughters Heads, lest these fine Trappings should be kidnapp'd from their empty Noddies by an unmannerly Brush of the lawcy Councillor. 'Twould make a Dog split his Halter, to hear the learned Cant between the Mistress and the Maid, when about the important Affair of adjusting her Ladships Arroy in a morning: you'd swear they were conjuring, they spatter out such a confus'd Jargon of hard Words, such a Horeh-potch of Mongrel Gibberish: Bring me my Passade there, quoth Madam: You'd think she were going to encamp. Will it not be convenient

to attack your *Flandan* first, says the Maid? More Anger yet? still Military Terms? Let me see, says Madam, where's my Corner? Pray carine this Favourite: So, so, good Words; now there's some hopes of Peace, till the blustering *Brilal* and *Borgoign* are call'd for, and then the old Catter-awling begins again?

There is a Clack of *Settees*, *Passes*, *Monte-lahouts*, *Crotches*, and other Trinkums, would make a Man suspect they are raising the Devil: at last comes the *Sur-les-fons*, and then Madam is compleatly harness'd for the Play, or the mysterious Ruelle.

Here *Heroclitus* made a Digression, at the sight of a Troop of Females that were walking by. These, said he, belong to the inferior Class of Top-knots; they are but one Story high yet. Do but follow 'em and you'll discover by the Working of their Heads and Tongues, that another is brooding: I took his Counsel, and keeping at some distance, observ'd their Motion.

I wonder, says one of them, why the Men should make such a noise about the innocent Arts we use to win their Affections. They pretend to love us, and yet would confine us to a Dress that would make 'em hate us. Whatsoever is not so gay and polite in the World, is despised and trampled on: We have reason to hold up our Heads, to deck out selves with all the Ornaments that may create Respect in that wild Race. Why should not an English Comode be as allowable as the Persian Flara, or the Roman *Septentium* were of old? Away with this servile Restraint! Let us appear like *Amazons*, dese the men, and all their grave Preachments, or lighter Papdils, I am resolv'd to be in the mode, tho' it should put me to the charge of maintaining a Negro to support the *Minimist* of Unbelief on my Head. With that *Dame Nature* steps up to her, and thus address'd.

When I first moulded Woman, and sublimated her from the grosser Ore, I drew into that fair *Compendium* all the visible Perfections of the Creation; in her native simplicity the glittered with Rays and Charms, that dazzled all Eyes: Nothing so savage or untam'd, that did not pay an Homage to her conquering Beauty. She needed no other Ornament than the lustre which flow'd from her unadorn'd Parts. How comes it to pass that she has lost her Diadem? and seeks in vain, to regain the matter'd Remnants of her former Glory, by borrowing from every

every Trifle, some counterfeit perfection to set her off? You are but the Milleners Machin, joyned together by Chambermaids officious hands. A meer *Chaos* of needless Manufactures jumbled into the perfect Figure of a Woman.

The Lady that had first occasion'd Madam Natures surprize, and all this Discourse, had not patience to hear any more, but looking on her Watch that was attach'd to her Crochet, made her a Revoir to the Company, excusing her abrupt departure, by telling them, 'twas time to go to the Play house. Upon which the young Fry of Top-knots buttoning up their Mouthes in a most charming manner, begg'd of her Ladyship to vindicate the common Cause against this Clownish old *Beldame*, that had made such a Coit about their Habilliments (for they had got that modish word by the end too). The Lady fond of the Character of a good nature'd Woman, took up the Cudgels, and turning to Dame Nature, spoke to her after this manner.

Prithce don't trouble thy head old Gentlewoman; said she, about the present Mode; the World is grown more refin'd and polite since your Youthful days: Women are not mew'd up in the Nursery, as in Queen *Eheabeths* time, but have Liberty of Construction; we are more *Exotick* (as I may say) than formerly wean'd from the Winter sales of the Chimney Corners, and learning the Modes abroad, and Customs of more civiliz'd Matrons. We had been absolutely barbarous, had it not been for the Conquest of the *Romans*: And we should be little amended now, were it not for the Neighbourhood of the more accomplish'd *French*. I am in love with that genteel Nation: *ma Foy*.

*Ma Foy* said *Heracitus* laughing, you are much in the right on't. I ever said the fondness of our *English* Women would make us Slaves to *France*; nothing but *French* will go down with us. We Eat, Drink, and Sleep in plain *English*; but we manage the rest of our Actions in *French*. We Love and Hate *A-la-mode de Paris*: We serve our King and Country *A-la-mode de Paris*: We walk, talk, dance and Sing *A-la-mode de Pa-*

*ris*. In fine, we do all things *en Ca- valier*, or *A-la-mode de Paris*, (which you will) being resolv'd to bring in the *French* King by Head and Shoulders, rather than stand idle. And as for Names, Fashions, and other Whim-whams, brought over from *France*; they are but as so many Introductions of the forlorn hope of a *French* Army, the Grooms of the wooden Horse that conceals the secret Enemies and Betrayers of our Ancient Liberties and Properties.

When *Heracitus* had done, a Body would have thought it was my turn to hold forth next, who had said nothing in this Company all the while; but I was ever kind to the Ladies; and seeing her run down by the Multitude, and Noise of her Antagonists, I had not the Heart to side with the strongest Party, tho I judg'd all to be truth they said; but seeing the Lady ready to depart, I very fairly offer'd her my hand: Had she accepted my Kindness, I believe it had been better for her Head-gear; for just as she cast a scornful Eye on me, telling me withal, That she lov'd no Neuters, all her Capital Gim-cracks were caught off at once from her Head by an unmannerly Bough of a Tree that hung over her, as she was deserting; which cross-grain'd Accident expos'd her Ladyships Bald-pate to the open View of her Enemy, my old Grandame; so that I had much ado with all the dexterity and haste I could make, to rescue her pendant Helmet time enough to attack it to her Skull before some *Bullies* came up to us, of whom you shall hear in the next.

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